GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4440
ANSWERED ON:22.04.2002
IMPORT DUTY ON AGRO PRODUCTS
SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI;SUNDER LAL TIWARI

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the newsitem captioned `Krishi Kshetra Kholane se Adhik Aarthik Sambhavanayen Paida Hongi − blackwill` appearing in the `Navbharat Times` dated March 9, 2002;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) whether opening up of the agricultural sector and withdrawal of the import duty from agro-products would be disastrous for the small and medium farmers; and

(d) if so, the steps the Government propose to take to safeguard the interests of the medium and small farmers?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV)

(a)&(b): Yes, Sir. The newsitem contains excerpts of inaugural speech of Mr. Blackwill, the Ambassador of USA in India.The Government intends to give primacy to promotion of agricultural exports since opportunity exists in the context of ongoing negotiations on agriculture at the WTO. WTO Agreements have provided a predictable rule based multilateral trading system. By virtue of signing of WTO agreement, India is automatically entitled to get thetreatment of most favoured nation (MFN) from all WTO members for its exports. The idea behind WTO agreements was trade liberalization through an open, equitable and rule based multilateral trading system. There are both rights and obligations accruing from membership of the WTO. The Government is in the process of helping the states to establish Agri-Export Zones in various states that have export potential.

(c)&(d): Subsequent to removal of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) on imports, theGovernment is closely monitoring the imports of agricultural commodities and when the situation warrants, takes WTO compatible measures to safeguard the interests of farmers. These measures include suitable calibration of the applied rates within the bound rates. Remedial measures such as anti-dumping action, imposition of countervailing action or safeguard action under specific circumstances provided under the Agreement can also be resorted to. The import duties on a number of agricultural products have been increased in the last 2 years to provide protection to the producers. The import of 300 sensitive items is constantly monitored by a Standing Group headed by the Commerce Secretary which suggests appropriate measures to regulate imports and provide protection to the producers.